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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S MEETING WITH MEXICAN PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE HELLER

Classified By: Ambassador Rice for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In an initial January 29 meeting with Ambassador Rice, Mexican PermRep Heller said that modest Security Council reform is the most feasible option. He commented that Mexico supported Security Council resolution 1860 on the ceasefire in Gaza and highlighted the importance of the Western Sahara issue to Mexico. Heller opined that the new administration has sufficient leverage at the UN to engage on tough issues, such as human rights, making it "difficult even for hardliners to say 'no'." The ambassadors also discussed disarmament, the Human Rights Council, polarization at the UN, and Mexico's leadership of the Rio Group. End Summary.

Security Council Reform

12. (C) In a warm introductory call with Mexican Perm Rep Claude Heller on January 29, Ambassador Rice said the President's first bilateral with Mexican President Calderon illustrated the importance the United States places on its relationship with Mexico. Heller emphasized the value Mexico places on maintaining a close relationship with the U.S. and both ambassadors agreed to coordinate openly and continuously on issues in the General Assembly and the Council. On Security Council reform, Heller said that Mexico is an active member of the Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group, which has "mixed participation." He underscored that the most feasible option is modest reform. He posited the reelection of non-permanent members as an option, using Japan as an example of a "semi-permanent" member regularly elected to serve on the Council by the region. The principle of accountability is also important, he said. Mexico does not want to write a "blank check" to a permanent Council member from the region.

13. (C) Ambassador Rice said the UN should reflect the changing global reality; failure to do so would diminish the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council. Rice said there is no utility in making a hard linkage between Security Council reform and the reform of other UN bodies. The bottom line is to ensure that the Council maintains its effectiveness and efficiency, she added. Ambassador Rice said that the Administration had not defined parameters for the size or membership of the Council.

Middle East

14. (C) Heller said that Mexico supports Security Council resolution 1860, which called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza leading to a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces. He believes that the resolution will "keep the UN in the debate" and added that Special Envoy Mitchell had also mentioned the importance of monitoring the ceasefire.

15. (C) Ambassador Rice told Heller that she hoped the Security Council would give the United States some space to allow Mitchell to engage the parties, reinforce the ceasefire, encourage the opening of border crossings and create a regime that is effective in the prevention of smuggling. The United States will work with the Quartet and others in support of a two-state solution. When action returns to the Council, she continued, it should be balanced.

Western Sahara

16. (C) Ambassador Heller raised the Western Sahara as an important domestic issue. He said Mexico recognized the Polisario in 1979 and added that the Polisario has an Ambassador in Mexico. Last year's discussion on the renewal of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was "quite heated," he said, noting the issue would come up under Mexico's presidency of the Council in April. Regions are very sensitive to this issue, he said, but Mexico hopes to play a constructive role in MINURSO's renewal.

Racism and the Human Rights Council

17. (C) Ambassador Rice sought Heller's views on the Durban Review Conference, she commented that negotiations in Geneva last week on the outcome document did not go well. She pointed out that racism is a serious challenge, worthy of consideration by the international community but the discussions in Geneva turned from racism to anti-Israel and anti-Semitic language, which is not acceptable. Ambassador Heller responded that the United States is engaging on these issues "at a good moment." He said the new Administration

and change of policies would "make room" to work with others not only on the outcome document, but also on the Human Rights Council. Recent events in Gaza would continue to complicate discussions on human rights and racism, but the new U.S. administration is coming in with sufficient leverage to make it difficult "even for hardliners to say 'no'," he opined.

Polarization at the UN

18. (C) Ambassador Heller said polarization and mistrust in the UN is "unfortunate" and offered several explanations, including the economic crisis, Iraq war, and the United States' former unilateral approach to policy. The discussion of human rights also "provokes a defensive position," Heller added, because of the perceived interference in domestic affairs. Some countries contend the UN is becoming a peacekeeping operation, he continued, while others claim development issues are no longer on the agenda. Members need to maintain a global perspective, he said, and the economic crisis is a good opportunity to move beyond polarization. Ambassador Rice rejected the dichotomy between security and economic and social development and emphasized the need for economic and social development to underpin security and vice versa. She said the Administration is interested in the entire UN agenda and will aim to approach issues from a comprehensive and cooperative perspective.

Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

19. (C) Ambassador Heller commented that balance is needed during the upcoming 2010 nonproliferation conference. Ambassador Rice said the new Administration is committed to strengthening and updating the nonproliferation regime and confirmed that the United States wanted to advance the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. It is essential to put international regulations on stable and constructive footing, she said.

Rio Group

10. (C) In addition to UN responsibilities, Ambassador Heller said that Mexico has been busy this year chairing the Rio Group. Mexico is working to maintain a balance between the

Rio Group, the General Assembly, and now the Security Council. He commented that some members -- specifically Venezuela, Bolivia, and recent addition Cuba -- make political management of the Group difficult, particularly on issues like the Middle East. Heller noted that of the three, Cuba is being more pragmatic in the UN than it has been in the past. Mexico's foreign policy is building bridges among countries, he said, including countries in the Rio Group, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Rice